

The Mystery of the Orange Tip Butterfly

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I have written elsewhere (*Ent. Record* 91: 16, 42, 158) of the return of the Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines* L. to the south of Scotland and northern England in recent years (1969-78). As a result of this article further records have been received and these seem to be of sufficient interest to merit mention and comments.

In the above article I did not mention the fact that further north in Scotland the Orange Tip staged an even earlier comeback than in the Borders. This was described by Commander G. W. Harper in *Ent. Record* 66: 59, where he stated that in Strathspey the Orange Tip remained unrecorded from 1860 until May 1953 when several males were taken at Boat of Garten, Aviemore, and Kingussie. Why should this resurgence of the species occur earlier in the north of Scotland than in the south? What factors could have influenced this increase?

In 1978, Miss G. A. Elliot reported that Orange Tips appeared in Aberdeenshire at Kildrummie and Crathes Castle and at one of these sites a comment was made that their appearance was the first in 25 years.

Another interesting report came from J. L. Campbell of Canna House, Isle of Canna under date 12.4.79. Mr. Campbell wrote "I was interested to read your article about the return of the Orange Tip in the Scottish Borders. I don't know if you see the News bulletin of the British Butterfly Conservation Society; a recent number contained an article about Argyll by a person who went there to see *C. palaemon* last summer. Quite casually he mentioned seeing a specimen of the Orange Tip in one of the woods.

I have never seen any record of *A. cardamines* from Argyll, though one would think it might easily occur in some of the old native woodlands there".

Mr. John Mitchell of the S.W. Scotland regional Nature Conservancy Council wrote to say that in the summer of 1977 Orange Tips were seen on the wing in a water-meadow near Westerton, Doune by Mr. David Thomson. This site is north of Stirling and in VC 87 (West Perth).

In East Lothian, Orange Tips have been observed in the Pencaitland area by Mr. P. Summers so confirming the reports by Mr. R. W. Barker. Mr. George Waterston has likewise seen specimens in his garden at Humbie. His first sighting was on 22.6.1977 "four in the air at one time in the front border" and again in 1978 and 1979.

In Midlothian, Mr. K. I. Ransome saw about 6 males along approximately 1 km length of the River Esk (NT 37) on 2.6.1979; this confirms the record of Miss M. J. Long on 19.5.1979.

In Berwickshire, Mr. M. E. Braithwaite reported Orange Tips at Gordon Moss on 10.6.1979. Two were also seen there

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on 17.6.1979 by Mr. P. Summers, who also saw one by the A7 three miles north of Galashiels on 19.6.1979.

In a personal communication from Mr. M. E. Braithwaite (Tweed Branch Scottish Wildlife Trust) he reported that Mr. W. Davidson of Kelso recorded Orange Tips at Makerston 25.5.1977; Roxburgh Castle 27.5.1977; Lochton, Berwickshire 20.5.1978; and Makerston 17.6.1979.

Dr. C. B. Williams of Kirkcudbright VC 73 wrote date 5.11.1979, "We have seen several of them in the 8 years that I have been here but they do not appear to be common."

In Northumberland the increase has been widespread. Mr. David G. Burleigh of Longframlington reported the butterflies in that village in 1977, 1978, and 1979. Mrs. P. Henzell of Elyhaugh Farm saw the butterflies near the R. Coquet, just in VC 68 in 1977 and 1978.

In Durham Mr. T. C. Dunn reported large numbers of Orange Tip caterpillars mostly fully grown on the Northern Naturalists' Field Meeting to the river banks at Wolsingham on 14.7.1979. The larvae were on the seed pods of *Alliaria petiolata*.

Since coming to live in Ponteland in 1968 I personally never saw an Orange Tip locally until 20.6.1979 when one appeared in my garden at Cheviot View. Since then I have heard of one being observed in the same neighbourhood in 1978. The last known record for Ponteland was in 1930. In Newcastle the Orange Tip re-appeared in 1976 when it was seen on 27th May at Close House by Mr. D. A. Sheppard. In 1978 it was seen on 2nd July at the Gosforth Park nature reserve by Mr. M. Walker and again on 13.6.1979. It was observed at Wylam on Tyne by Mr. T. M. Martin on 16.5.1978. North of Ponteland about six were seen near Millbourne by Mr. R. M. Wilcock during June 1978, and in 1977 one ovum was seen on *Alliaria* by Mr. P. Summers at Wallington on 26th June.

The last previous record for the Newcastle area I can find appears to have been for Plessey Woods (NZ27) on 26.5.1865 by A. M. Norman so that its absence or scarcity spanned 111 years. Previously it had occurred commonly on the Ponteland road as recorded by John and Albany Hancock in 1826 and 1827.

Perhaps the most interesting communication I have received came from Professor Eric Lees of Bradford University. He attributes the increase of the Orange Tip to later emergence leading to more successful breeding and thinks this has resulted from a fall in the mean temperature in April during the past decade.

If this theory is correct could it also explain the earlier resurgence of the butterfly in Invernesshire in 1953 before that in the Scottish Borders and northern England?